Graduate Honor Council Policies and Procedures

Approved as amended by the Faculty Senate

February 25, 2015 (revised February 3, 2016)

1. The Faculty Senate and the Provost established the Graduate Honor Council (GHC) consisting of half faculty and half graduate students to consider all cases of possible violation of the Honor Code by graduate students. A graduate student is enrolled in a Rice University master’s or doctoral degree program. The Graduate Council with concurrence of the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (DGPS) can add certain other students enrolled at Rice, such as visiting students, to the jurisdiction of the GHC. Postdoctoral appointees do not fall under this policy.

2. The GHC adopts the spirit of the constitution, by-laws, and procedures of the Honor Council except as modified by GHC Policies and Procedures. GHC and Honor Council may communicate as the GHC considers its by-laws and procedures. The Student Judicial Programs (SJP) and the Associate Dean of Undergraduates will be copied on communications between the GHC and the Honor Council. As soon as practical, preferably within the first two years of its operation, the GHC will adopt its own complete set of governing documents.

3. An alleged violation by a graduate student shall be reported by faculty or students to the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (DGPS). DGPS may delegate receipt of such reports as deemed desirable in consultation with GHC and in accord with university policies and governmental regulations. DGPS shall maintain permanent and confidential records of outcomes for each student, whose case was processed under the jurisdiction of the GHC, as DGPS deems desirable and in accord with university policies and governmental regulations. Additional case records shall be retained as DGPS deems desirable. Student Judicial Programs shall maintain the complete records for GHC cases, including all correspondence, concerning all alleged allegations by graduate students. This records policy does not apply to research misconduct cases which are confidential and under exclusive jurisdiction of the Research Integrity Officer (RIO). Students have a duty under the Honor Code to report possible violations. This duty does not require that a student must directly report an allegation to DGPS, although direct reporting is preferred and encouraged. While a student may initially report the alleged violation to a faculty member, university administrator, Honor Council, or GHC for transmission to DGPS, the student normally must be identified and serve as a witness if called. In research misconduct cases, however, the complainant may choose to remain anonymous unless the complainant agrees to testify. The intermediary must report to DGPS, and confirm back to the student in writing that the case has been reported and where. DGPS or GHC may decide that an exception concerning student witnesses exists, for example, in instances of alleged plagiarism, when the fact of plagiarism can be determined directly from documents such that a student witness is not required to testify.

4. An alleged violation by a graduate student shall be handled under one and only one of three categories: course work, research misconduct, or advanced degree requirement violation. Standards for defining each category are provided below. As the first step in all investigations, a
tria ge committee consisting of the DGPS or designee and the Research Integrity Officer (RIO) or designee will vet all cases to determine if the possible violation is an instance of research misconduct or an advanced degree requirement violation. Cases will be referred to the RIO, GHC, or department chair as appropriate.

a. The GHC shall handle all allegations involving course work violations, instances in which a graduate student knew of a violation of the Honor Code and did not report such violation as required under the Honor Code, and instances in which a graduate student made a false accusation knowingly. Examples of course work violations are cheating on homework, exams, or other written assignments submitted for course credit and plagiarism in any written work submitted for course credit and not intended for publication. Plagiarism in any written work intended for publication, whether submitted for course credit or not, falls exclusively under jurisdiction of the RIO and Rice Policy 324 on Research Misconduct (see 4-b below). GHC or RIO may refer allegations to the other when any information is uncovered during investigation suggesting a violation of rules within the other’s authority. When a plagiarism allegation arises in a course credit submission and subsequently during investigation also appears to involve intended publication, GHC will forward the matter to RIO to be addressed by the research misconduct process. RIO then determines whether plagiarism has occurred or not. For a case received from GHC, RIO and DGPS then assume responsibility for determining penalty, including course work grade. Course work excludes thesis or dissertation registration and research project registration.

b. The RIO shall handle all cases involving research misconduct violations whether occurring in a specific course or not. Such violations are defined in Rice Policy 324 on Research Misconduct and include plagiarism (other than in strictly course credit submissions not intended for publication), multiple submissions of research articles, false citations, and falsified or fabricated data in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results, especially where such activity is aimed at publication or is affected by funding regulations. Plagiarism in documents submitted for course credit and not intended for publication falls under jurisdiction of GHC (see 4-a).

c. In accord with Article III, Section 3, of the Honor Council Constitution, other than research misconduct violations, "Any violation involving advanced degree requirements other than course work (i.e., language exams, theses, [dissertations], etc.) will be referred to the proper department chair." In interdisciplinary programs, the “department chair” shall be the substitute governance entity. Plagiarism in dissertations or theses is handled by the RIO under 4-b (see above).

5. Size of GHC may depend on volume of violations. GHC initially shall consist of four tenured faculty members and four graduate students as specified in sub-paragraphs a, b, and c.

a. Faculty Senate will select the faculty members. One shall be from the Jones Graduate School of Business, one from either Engineering or Natural Sciences, and one from Humanities, Social Sciences, Architecture or Music. The fourth shall be from a school not already represented on the GHC. Each member shall be appointed for a two-year term, which can be repeated to a maximum of three terms.

b. One graduate student shall be an MBA or PhD in Management candidate in the Jones School designated by the Jones Student Association (JSA). Two graduate students shall be doctoral
candidates designated by the Graduate Student Association (GSA). The fourth graduate student shall be at the discretion of GSA. Beyond the initial two graduate students, the GSA representation may expand by adding master’s or doctoral students. Graduate students shall be appointed for a one-year term, which can be repeated to a maximum of three terms so long as the appointee remains a graduate student in good standing and is not currently under investigation by GHC (see 21).

c. Any future expansion of GHC recommended by GHC due to increased volume of cases shall, upon approval by the Faculty Senate and Provost, proceed by adding one faculty member and one graduate student at a time so that composition remains balanced between faculty and graduate students. An additional faculty member shall come from a school not already represented on the GHC. In expansion, once all schools are represented, the initial composition (defined in 5a) will be repeated.

6. A GHC member shall not be recused or challenged on grounds of acquaintance, other than marriage or romantic relationship or kinship, with an accused or by being a member of the same school, department, or program. A GHC faculty member or graduate student member who is the complaining party in a case shall be recused. If Chair GHC is the complaining party, the Deputy Chair GHC shall handle the case.

7. Unless the Faculty Senate opts to appoint a Chair, GHC shall annually elect a Chair and a Deputy Chair from among the faculty members. The Chair shall conduct hearings, except in the instance of a recusal.

8. A finding of In Violation shall require a unanimous vote of the GHC hearing panel assigned by the GHC Chair. A GHC hearing panel shall consist of three faculty members and three graduate students, who are members of the GHC. A hearing panel is a subset of GHC. Hearing panels may vary by case. The standard for determining if a violation of the Honor Code has occurred shall be preponderance of evidence, as under the Honor Council. GHC determines its own internal procedures for hearing panels. Consistent with Honor Council practices, after hearing evidence, a hearing panel with only GHC members present generally will discuss the evidence, take a straw poll, discuss the evidence further, and take a final vote. When the hearing panel makes a finding of In Violation it will then consider and vote on penalty. The Working Group recommended this hearing panel procedure as best practice. However, GHC could develop its own practices for hearing panels that would require review and approval by the Faculty Senate and Provost. Upon completion of a GHC case, all GHC records, including correspondence, will be transferred to Student Judicial Programs or another Rice office designated for this purpose. Any copies maintained by GHC should normally be destroyed after 10 years.

9. For course work violations, GHC shall determine an appropriate penalty, taking into consideration the totality of the circumstances in a case as well as reviewing any consensus penalties adopted by the Honor Council. GHC may modify these penalties for graduate students.

a. GHC may determine by unanimous vote that special circumstances of egregious violation of course work requirements justify expulsion or prolonged suspension and this recommendation will be made to the University.
b. Penalties for research misconduct violations handled through the RIO and advanced degree requirements handled by department chairs are determined by the relevant administrative officials.

10. Where a graduate student and an undergraduate student are alleged to have been involved in the same violation, the graduate student is subject to GHC Policies and Procedures. The Chair GHC shall communicate with Honor Council concerning the case for purposes of information exchange and coordination. Separate investigations may be conducted.

11. GHC will communicate all decisions to DGPS and Student Judicial Programs.

12. Only anonymous summaries of cases shall be published. The Chair GHC will prepare such summaries of violations under GHC jurisdiction for website publication in order to inform the graduate student population. Under no circumstances shall summaries of alleged research misconduct cases be published.

13. Once it is determined under 4 that an alleged violation falls under jurisdiction of GHC, investigation shall be conducted by a GHC faculty member designated by the Chair GHC. The Chair GHC shall try to designate an investigator not in the same school as the accused, but this procedure is not mandatory when not feasible. The investigator shall prepare a written report of findings and recommendations. The investigator and Chair GHC (or Deputy Chair GHC in an instance of recusal of the Chair GHC) shall consult and concur on whether the investigation results warrant taking the alleged violation to a GHC hearing panel. The Chair GHC shall report all findings to GHC. GHC will determine by majority vote whether to establish a hearing panel on the basis of the report of the investigator and Chair GHC.

14. The GHC will provide a pool of graduate student ombuds annually, either from GHC graduate student members not serving on a panel for the case or from appointments of graduate students to this pool with the concurrence of the Chair GHC. In order to assure ombuds independence, an accused may request a specific ombuds from a list of persons available to serve in this role for the case.

15. Once the relevant Rice University degree has been awarded at Commencement, any allegation concerning course work, non course work degree requirements, and research misconduct will be handled through non-GHC university processes as Rice may deem appropriate.

16. All GHC meetings are closed, except by invitation extended by a majority vote. Typically such invitation will be restricted to relevant university officials.

17. Only the accused, the assigned or invited ombuds, and GHC members may attend a hearing to determine whether a violation has occurred. No other individual, including attorneys, are permitted to attend.

18. Only GHC members may attend a post-hearing meeting to determine a violation or penalty. A majority vote may invite the ombuds, the Associate Dean overseeing SJP, and/or university counsel for particular advice and information. No other individual, including attorneys for the accused, are permitted to attend.
19. In accord with Honor Council procedure, a graduate student may not avoid determination of a violation and penalty by withdrawal, refusal to cooperate with GHC, or failure to attend a scheduled GHC hearing. GHC may proceed with its process and decision even in such cases.

20. Any required budget, storage, or website requirements, as recommended by GHC, will be referred to the Provost and Speaker of the Faculty Senate for action.

21. Appeals shall be handled as under the Honor Council Constitution. Student Judicial Programs will coordinate appeals to the Faculty Appeal Panel and then the President. Appeal decisions should be sent to the student, GHC, DGPS, and Student Judicial Programs.

22. A graduate student remains in good standing until final outcome of an allegation, including appeal.

23. GHC Policies and Procedures are in effect as early as July 1, 2015, for violations occurring subsequent to publishing the new policies and procedures to the graduate student population.

24. This document can be modified by approval of the Faculty Senate, or the Senate Executive Committee at the Senate’s discretion, and the Provost.

25. This Policies and Procedures document does not address any matters concerning submission of book manuscripts to presses for their consideration, including multiple submissions. Such submissions are regulated by press contracts, and any matters arising in this regard for the university will reside with the Provost.